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CONCILIATORY

ESSAY,

ADDRESSED

TO THE

METHODISTS

IN

GENERAL



by Cambridge

SUNDERLAND.

Printed by T. REED, BOOKSELLER.

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INTRODUCTION.

A Printed Letter, containing the General Address, Plan, and Contents of this Essay, was sent abroad under considerable disadvantages. No sooner had I reason to believe that it was candidly received, than I felt severely for the cause it was intended to serve. Very numerous ideas crowded upon me, on the importance of the work, and the outlines which had been suggested. Destitute of the advantages of regular education, and immersed in a variety of secular concerns, I was immediately aware I had not only exposed myself, but what was of infinitely greater moment, the cause I had espoused, to the censure of the scholar and student in divinity, who might have a pleasure in exposing the fallacy of my arguments and defects of stile. Conscious of having but one cause to serve, I think myself on all these accounts obliged thus candidly to state my apprehensions.

Some things I could have remedied, had I not preferred spreading it immediately to the delay that would have occasioned. And in the most serious manner can assure my Brethren that I shall acquiesce in any deserved censure with some pleasure, if the attempt produces the labours of abler pens, or leads to any thing which will promote peace. It may also lessen the imperfections of this work to observe, I do not present it to my Brethren as a *proper investi-*

investigation of the subjects, but rather as a sketch of the leading principles which will bear to be pursued and applied in order to promote union. Want of leisure and information prevent me from proceeding into many consequences that might arise from these sentiments. One thing I would particularly remark, I have studiously endeavoured to keep in view, that we are under no obligation to pursue any system but what is dictated by the oracles of God. An attempt is made here to bring the whole subject of our disputes to the law and to the testimony. The point aimed at is not so much to establish any particular plan, as to prove *that so far as we forget that we are Brethren, we must expect divisions with all their evil consequences.* If I have materially failed in this, it will afford me some consolation to think I have wished to promote peace; to hope I have neither disregarded nor designedly wrested the Scriptures; and that I have studied to avoid wounding the minds of others whose intentions were pure.

M. LONGRIDGE.

P. S. However this attempt may be treated, I have little opportunity and less inclination to reply publicly to any remarks which may be made on it.

C O N T E N T S.

Chap. 1. *Surveys the New Testament Church. It is a voluntary Society, formed on principles of brotherly love, having one end in view—the obtaining eternal life. Subject to one lawgiver, the Lord Jesus Christ. Walking by the same rule, his revealed will.*

The Government of this Society consists, in a due execution of the laws of Christ relative to the appointment of its officers—reception—Government and exclusion of its Members—decent management of all its affairs.

This Government not assumed by any distinct part, in opposition to the rest, it arises from the concurrence of the whole—mutual deliberation and acquiescence in the general judgment, the great bond of union in the primitive church.

Chap 2. *Wherein the Methodists correspond with the primitive church. They are a Society of Brethren, voluntarily united, avowing the same principles and end, subject to the same lawgiver, and walking by the same rule.*

Their Leaders, Quarterly, District and Conference Meetings are voluntary Meetings of mutual deliberation for the general good. The people have much union and influence with the Preachers in the appointment of Stewards, Class Leaders, and Preachers.

In the reception, government, and exclusion of Members, and in what relates to the decent management of the affairs of the Connection.

Wherein the Methodists differ from the primitive church. Some defects in the means of mutual deliberation between the Circuits and Conference. No constant intercourse open. An Assistant Preacher the only medium.

Reasons for that being insufficient; negligence, ignorance, design may prevent Conference understanding the sentiments of the people. No final appeal established by mutual consent. Conference the only one. Reasons for its not being effectual, chiefly want of intercourse with their people.

Evils

Evils which arise from these effects, reserve, distrust, difference in judgment, opposite interests, mutual claims to power, appeals to civil law, means to divide rather than unite the Connection.

Chap. 3. *Probable means to remove these evils. Quarter-days the best means of collecting the sense of the people. Annual address from each Circuit to Conference. Each address to be noticed in minutes. Minutes delivered at first quarter-days to Circuit Stewards. Evils attending Lay Delegates, and unnecessary applications to Conference.*

Chap. 4. *Contains an address to those who are solicitous to introduce the Sacraments.*

Reasons why they ought to bear with their Brethren who oppose them. Their arguments considered.

2. *An address to those who oppose the Sacrament. Reasons against such opposition. Sacrament scriptural. We ought not to divide from our Brethren because they obey Scripture.*

3. *An address to Trustees. The esteem they deserve in the Connection. The burthens they sustain. The support they are entitled to. The nature of their power. It cannot amount to any command over the judgment or conscience of others in the worship of God.*

4. *The General Address.*

A

Conciliatory Essay, &c.

C H A P. I.

A Survey of the New Testament Church.

A I.I. disorder in the world has a departure from the Divine will as its origin.

The present contentions amongst the Methodists are certainly owing to this cause. Were it clearly understood and fully attended to, all would be of one mind, one judgment, striving together for the hope of the Gospel.

An unfeigned desire to strengthen the bonds of peace, and increase the unity of the spirit has given rise to the following Essay; in which it is intended,

1. To survey the Scriptures which relate to the government of the Christian Church.

2. To trace the circumstances wherein the Methodists correspond with, or differ from, the primitive church as described in the New Testament, with the evils which arise from a want of attention to Scripture principles.

3. To attempt to point out some probable steps towards terminating our divisions.

4. Affectionately to address all parties.

If what is written be according to the oracles of God, it will doubtless command attention; if not, it will be justly neglected.

If we enquire, 1st. What is meant by the Church? 2. What is implied in its Government? 3. By whom that Government is executed? 4. What is the nature of that power which is exercised in it? it may lead us to every thing important in this part of the subject.

1st Then, the Scriptures countenance the idea of the Church universal, which includes the whole mystical body of

Christ, in all places, and at all periods. Heb. xii. 23. Col. i. 18. Acts xx. 28.

2. The word Church sometimes denotes the whole body of those, who make any visible profession of a religious regard to the revealed will of God; whereof some have the power, others, only the form of Godliness. Heb. ii. 12. 1 Cor. xii. 12, 28. Eph. iii. 10, 21. Matt. xxv. 1, 2. xx. 16. and xxii. 11.

3. Sometimes the word denotes only one *particular Society* of Christians, professedly devoted to God according to the rules of the Gospel; usually meeting for Divine worship in one place, or, to speak more exactly and fully, "A company of people voluntarily united together, professing themselves influenced by the same principles, aiming at the same end, walking by the same rule, and subject to the same authority:" this may be called a particular visible Gospel Church, and to which the following observations principally refer. Gal. i. 22. Acts viii. 1. xiii. 1. 1 Cor. xiv. 33. Acts ix. 31. Rom. xvi. 5. Rev. i. 11. 1 Cor. xiv. 23.

The Government of a Church appears to imply "A due execution of the laws of Christ relative to—The appointment of its officers—Reception, government, and exclusion of its Members—And the decent management of all its affairs to its edification."

I know not how to express myself more clearly than by observing, that the proofs of this seem included in considering, by whom this Government is executed?

To determine which, it is necessary to consider, whether it is executed by any particular part of a Christian Church without the concurrence of the other? or it is done with the concurrence of the whole, as far as circumstances admit? To exemplify this, it may be observed those meant by the Officers of a Church include, its spiritual teachers, and those who are entrusted with the temporal affairs. The former I shall promiscuously term Bishops, Elders, Teachers, and Ministers. Acts xx. 17. Titus i. 5, 6. 1 Pet. v. i. The latter Deacons. Acts vi.—Do the Scriptures of the New Testament imply, that either of these were appointed to their office by the people without the advice and sanction of their teachers? or were they appointed by the teachers without

without the advice and sanction of the people to whom they were known? or were they generally appointed by the teachers, with the request and concurrence of the people? Acts xiv. 23. 2 Tim. ii. 2. Tit. i. 5. Acts vi. 3, 5. and xi. 22. 2 Cor. viii. 19, 23. 1 Tim. iii. 2, 8. Tit. i. 6, 9. 1 Tim. iii. 8, 12. and iv. 14.

The appointment of men to the office of an Elder seems to have rested with the Apostles and Ministers. Acts xiv. 23. 2 Tim. ii. 2. Tit. i. 5. 1 Tim. iv. 14.—Those who were Ministers of Christ, by the laying on of hands, testified their approbation of others as fitted for that work. Yet it seems equally clear, that they must have had the concurrence of the people in this: 1. Because the people had a voice in the election of a Deacon; and if they were consulted where their temporal interest was concerned, much more ought they in their eternal. 2. Their Teachers were to be men of good report: Now, the characters of those who desired the office of a Bishop must be known either by Divine inspiration, or in an ordinary way. If by Divine inspiration, the primitive church can form no precedent for this day. If by ordinary means, the testimony of the brethren would be the strongest ground for the presbytery to determine on.—From all these considerations, I infer, that though the judgment of Ministers appears naturally to have the greatest weight, in determining who are fit for the work, though the New Testament seems to have given them a greater power in this than in almost any thing else relative to the government of the Church; yet reason and scripture both lead us to believe the Apostles themselves used every means in their power, to have the judgment of the brethren, relative to the character of those they received into the ministry, and that they would not have ordained any one *who was not of good report*.

2. The Deacons were appointed in the primitive church, to take care of its *secular* affairs, that the Bishop or Pastor might be more at leisure to attend to its spiritual concerns. Acts vi. 2, 3, 4. It is evident they were chosen by the multitude of the disciples, and by them set before the Apostles, who laid their hands on them. Acts vi. 5, 6.

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3. I do not recollect any Scripture which particularly decides on the persons who were to receive others into the communion of the Christian Church; but it seems most natural to conclude, that this would rest, in its executive part, with the Pastor of that church to which they applied, and that they would have recourse when necessary, to the judgment of his brethren, appears from considerations nearly similar to those advanced before on the subject of a Minister. The accounts we have of the formation of the Christian church at and after the day of Pentecost can hardly be deemed a precedent. If baptism be considered as the badge of their admission into the Church as well as their profession of Christ, it is evident our Lord sent his disciples to baptize men, and that this is peculiar to the office of a Minister.

This subject may receive further light by enquiring into those Scriptures which relate to the *exclusion* of Members.

4. The New Testament particularizes several evils, for which men were to be rejected from the Christian church: but most of these imply, that it was more immediately the *act of the Church* than of its Minister, to unite in separating such offenders from their communion. See Tit. iii. 10. 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18. 1 Tim. i. 20. and vi. 3, 4, 5. Rev. ii. 2. Heb. xii. 15, 16. 1 Cor. v. 11, 13. Gal. v. 12. Rom. xvi. 17. 2 Thess. xiv. 15. Matt. xviii. 16, 17. 1 Tim. v. 20. 1 Thess. v. 14. 2 Cor. ii. 7.

The inference which appears to arise from these two last subjects is, that the Ministers of the Gospel generally received any who made a profession of faith in Christ; that they finally excluded from their communion such as the *brethren* proved to walk unworthy of that profession.

5. The government of the Members of a Church, as far as is concerned in the present question, implies a due superintendence over its various Members, that they walk as becomes their profession, in their several relations to God, their neighbour, or themselves. This superintendence, though greatly connected with the office of a Minister, by no means belongs exclusively to him. That it belongs in some degree to all is evident from the very nature of Christianity, which is particularly intended to teach men to care for the happiness of

of others. The Scriptures in the preceding section shew how far every brother is concerned *to warn the unruly and reject the disorderly.*

6. As there are several circumstantial things concerning the management of the mere externals of religion, not expressly provided for by Jesus Christ, it necessarily follows, that churches have a power of prescribing to themselves such particular methods, forms and rules respecting these things, as they judge most agreeable to that rule, Let all things be done decently and in order, to edification.—These may relate to the time and place of worship, to the means of providing for the support of a Minister, or other circumstances of a similar nature. That every determination of this nature should be done by the judgment of the major part concerned is evident, from the evils which would arise, if individuals, or the less part of a community, had a power to rule the greater, contrary to their judgment. This would not only be contrary to the common sense and usages of mankind, but to every part of Scripture, which teaches us to submit ourselves to each other in the fear of God. Eph. v. 21. To let nothing be done through strife. Phil. ii. 3. and not to be wise in our own conceits. Rom. xii. 16.

The following Scriptures also serve to shew how contrary it is to the custom of the primitive church. Acts xv. 22, 23. 2 Cor. viii. 19, 23.

Will it not follow from this survey, 1. That the Christian church was a voluntary Society, united by principles of brotherly love. 2. That the power exercised in it was a power arising from the concurrence of the general body.—No power *was assumed* by one part of the community in opposition to the rest; Ministers and people had no separate interests. No attempts were made to lord it over God's heritage.

The power of its rulers was conferred on that part of the community for the good of the whole; *the Church was a Society of Brethren, and admitted no superiority of individuals, but what arose from their utility to the whole.* The brethren were honoured for their work's sake.

This power did not interfere with the civil power. The Ministers of Jesus Christ had nothing to do with punishing

the bodies, seizing the property, or imprisoning the persons of offenders; or to impose any thing on the consciences of any of its members.

The authority of such Societies consisted, only in brotherly admonition and reproof, or at most, separation from the special privileges of church fellowship with themselves.—Ecclesiastical history shews how the Christian church has suffered by a departure from these principles (A.)

C H A P. II.

Wherein the Methodists correspond with the Primitive Church.

THE Methodists are a Society of Brethren, voluntarily united, avowing the same principles and end, subject to the same lawgiver, and walking by the same rule.

Their Leaders, Quarterly District, and Conference Meetings, *are voluntary meetings of mutual deliberation for the general good.* The people have much union and influence with the Preachers, in the appointment of Stewards, Class Leaders, and Preachers. In the reception, government, and exclusion of Members, and in what relates to the decent management of the affairs of the Connection, so far the Methodists appear to correspond with Scripture principles.

In enquiring wherein they differ I observe, 1. If the Church of Christ be a Society of Brethren, if the definition given of the nature of the power exercised in its government be in the main true; it will follow, *that its Governors should admit mutual deliberation with those they govern, as far as circumstances allow; and, that should circumstances exist in a religious society, which tend to form any opposition of judgment or interest in its distinct parts, there should be a final appeal established by mutual consent, whenever it can be done without violating the rights of conscience.* From the Scriptures already produced, it seems natural to infer, that the community in general, were consulted when necessary, and that they determined difficult cases by a general voice.—In these instances, the present state of the Methodists seems defective. 1. There wants a fuller communication between the

the several parts of the body.—2. There does not appear a final appeal by mutual consent.

How these may be established is not easy to determine.—Yet, if attempts are made on all sides, surely the God of peace and truth will guide the meek in judgment. Some hints will be suggested in a part of this Essay. Want of information may render them useless, but the attempt is justifiable. At present this seems the root of many other evils. Mutual claims to distinct power have arisen, arisen to great height. Each party is conscious of the purity of its own intentions; each professes to seek peace and truth. Surely men so disposed, only want a *fuller communication* with each other, and a *final appeal by mutual consent*, to terminate their differences.

But let us examine in a general view, *the facts* which prove a want of fuller intercourse between the Conference and the people, before we proceed further.

1st Then, As far I understand the nature of the Methodist Connection, the Traveling Preachers assembled in Conference, by the voluntary consent of the people, have a power to receive and station Preachers, to collect and apply money for the support of the Ministry, to divide Circuits, and to form annually such rules as relate to themselves and the body at large.

2. There is a communication maintained between the Conference and Circuits by the Assistant Preacher; who in private, in Leaders, and Quarter-day Meetings, has opportunity of conversing with the people on all subjects of moment.

3. Yet it is certain, that in some respects this intercourse is not so effectual as our circumstances will admit. The motives which our Preachers avow at their entrance on the work, imply a strict attention to the complaints and concerns of their people. Individuals and Circuits may have recourse to Conference, *but it not being an avowed part of our plan that Circuits ought regularly to communicate their sentiments to Conference*, naturally determines the people to apply through the medium of an assistant.

Now if he differs in his judgment from, or be unsatisfactory in, representing the sentiments of the Circuit, or if he be disposed not
to

to collect them, the people may be ruled without being consulted, (11) they may be totally deprived of having any voice, even a negative) in sending Preachers into the Connection, in the division of Circuits, or in the formation of any rules for their own government.

That there is no final appeal by mutual consent will appear, if we consider, that *when a proper mean is established for admitting deliberations with the people, the Conference alone are the proper rulers of the Methodist body.* But, that as far as the means of mutual deliberation are neglected, the people must be ruled without their own consent. Hence, when circumstances arise in which the sentiments of the body in general is necessary, there will not only be a defect in obtaining these sentiments, but there will be no effective method of prevailing with that body to acquiesce in subjects, on which they have not been sufficiently consulted. In other words, there will be no final appeal to which they will submit by mutual consent. This is certainly the present state of the Methodists.

The Conference is, properly speaking, the only appeal to which the people have an idea of submitting; but conscious that they *may not* be fully represented there, the power of Conference seems not sufficient to preserve the union of the body. This evidently arises from a want of *sufficient intercourse* between the Circuits and Conference.

2. If it be asked what is meant by a final appeal by mutual consent? It is answered, the subject has various difficulties; yet as I rather wish to express ideas than insist on mere terms, I will, as briefly as I can, observe, "*'Tis any means by which the Methodists can unite, to determine on every thing relative to their community, and to which, they will individually submit the determination of subjects which arise in their Government, when such determinations are not manifestly contrary to the Scriptures.*"

At present, I repeat, the want of this appears to be one source of our disorders: hence we see, divisions in Societies on subjects, on all sides confessedly non-essential to their salvation; contentions about legal right between the Trustees and the Conference; a tendency to the same between the Trustees and the People, and between the Preachers themselves.

To

To whom this appeal should be made is easier to say, than the particular subjects to which it may relate.

A difference of judgment is unavoidable in the present state. Right of judgment is every man's prerogative. Obedience to its dictates, is the just distinction of an unright mind. Yet, a proper deference to the judgment of others, and a concession of our own, *when the rights of conscience are preserved inviolate* are the great bonds and ornaments of society.

It is therefore with great propriety the Scriptures exhort us, to submit one to another in the fear of God.

There is some difficulty in applying these remarks to particular cases; there is a peculiar one in the subject before us, as every Society may be called a Church, or the whole body may be considered in that view. Hence, in some instances, the judgment of a small part may affect the whole. Yet distinct Societies have a final appeal within themselves, on subjects which affect no other. In cases of necessity, the people ought to be individually consulted. In all cases they ought virtually to be so.

The whole Connection may have a final appeal in the decisions of Conference, provided every means of deliberation be used.

At present the Connection hardly understand by what means they may unite in mutual deliberation for the good of the whole. The Conference is the only Channel; but the imperfect communication the Circuits have with it, and with each other through that medium, has led them to attempt other means to deliberate themselves, in a manner which wears the face of opposition.

The evils which have arisen from want of intercourse and mutual submission are very numerous.

May we not attribute to these causes that it is not understood on what subjects the sense of the Brethren collectively, are to be received, and attended to by Conference? Want of intercourse creates *Reserve* in the people, least they should grieve the Preachers by improper applications; by this means, *Distrust* arises and *Jealousies* are spread through the Connection, *that the Conference want to rule without consulting the people.* When subjects arise in which there is
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a difference of judgment, this want of intercourse, attended with reserve and suspicion, strengthens the force of prejudice, and inflames the violence of party. When these subjects interest the whole body (as those this year) there seems no centre of intercourse; letters are circulated at an immense expence, and instead of uniting to deliberate *as the disciples of Jesus Christ*, parties are formed—formed in the worst manner.

May we not attribute to this, the different claims of power, and the impious appeal to civil law? *Had the body of Methodists established by mutual consent a final appeal, and had they enjoyed a sufficient intercourse with it, should we have had the affecting scenes which have taken place this year? Would the most distinguished men in the Connection have had occasion to treat each other with the severity they have done? Would they themselves have felt the necessity of circulating papers, calculated more to divide than unite the parties?*

To a want of sufficient intercourse, an unwillingness to submit in love to each other, I cannot help attributing a considerable part of these circumstances which threaten to divide and destroy the Methodists.

C H A P. III.

Plan of Union, &c.

SURELY if any means can be suggested which may disperse the clouds that hang over us, they ought to be tried. Is there any better way to reunite us than by reverting to our first principles? Let us love and live as brethren; let us keep this in view, and apply it as far as possible. *Open the fullest intercourse between the Conference and People. Let these be united in love, and no set of men will be capable of forming a schism in the body.*

The Conference, and the Conference alone, are the proper rulers of the Methodist Churches in a collective view. The people rejoice to consider them as such, they do not desire their power should be less; nay, many conclude their hands are not made sufficiently strong, that in many instances their burthens are intolerable, their difficulties are such, as none but

but the head of the Church can support them under; yet many of these arise from the people not sufficiently sharing their burdens. How to open a fuller intercourse between the Conference and People has justly, been thought difficult. The medium of an Assistant Preacher has been long tried. The work of Conference is so important, that to increase it, may be thought inexpedient. Delegates from Circuits or Districts in general will certainly be attended with much inconvenience. Notwithstanding what has been said on the tendency of our system to depart from Scripture principles, yet it is allowed, that we possess much of the spirit of brotherly love in the whole of our æconomy; and perhaps we only want a stricter attention to the purest principles of our union, and not a deviation from our plan, to counteract the evils which exist. The Leaders' and quarterly meetings appear to be formed on the very principles of the primitive Church.

In most cases they are adequate to the affairs of a Circuit, when they are not, district meetings are an additional help. Conference is our final resort.

The writer ventures to suggest, that an explanation from Conference of their desire to communicate in the fullest manner they can with their people, would greatly unite the body, and tend to allay jealousy. This avowal of their sentiments might point out the intercourse at present subsisting, by means of the Assistant Preacher recommending to all who interest themselves in the work, to render Quarter days as public as possible, to use their best endeavours to inform their people how far they were called upon to take an active part in the concerns of the Church.

That when cases occur which can not be determined at Quarterly Meetings, District Meetings will attend to them; what can not be determined there, may be referred to Conference (c).

Perhaps it will be prudent to point out to the Connection at large the great inconvenience which will attend a meeting of numerous Delegates from the Circuits with Conference.

As 1st it must considerably increase the expence of Conference. 2. It will be nearly impossible to discuss the immense number of subjects, with the debates they must occasion

tion in so numerous a meeting, in any time that could be appropriated for the purpose. 3. Few Delegates could enter into the general business of the Conference, hence much of their time must be lost. 4. The Circuits would entrust a degree of power with an individual less capable of serving them than the Members of Conference, when they may do that for themselves in a much more effectual manner.

Fully convinced that Delegates would not answer the purpose designed, some plan similar to the following would be tried in order to open a sufficient intercourse between the Preachers and their People (D.)

Outlines of a Plan submitted to the Methodists in general, but more immediately to the Preachers, as a means to promote a permanent union amongst us.

1. That Conference request every Assistant will render the quarter-days as public as possible; in order to this, he will fully explain to the Societies the necessity there is for their Stewards *as their representatives* conscientiously to attend the quarter-days.

2. That the quarter-day previous to Conference, a letter shall be sent *from each Circuit*, signed by the majority of that Meeting, expressing their views of the state of the work of God in the Circuit, together with their sentiments on *any* subject they think important, either to themselves, or the Connection in general.

3. That in case any question arises in which the persons assembled at quarter-day differ in their judgment, *and it be of such a nature as to need a division upon it*, it shall be determined by the Brethren assembled, *not as individuals but as representatives of the several Societies*; so that the number of the *whole Brethren* in a Circuit, by this means, may easily determine a question; each Society only bearing the just proportion of number in the whole body (E.)

4. We think it consistent with Scripture principles, that in such cases as are supposed, due honor should be paid to the judgment of those who watch over our souls; and therefore recommend that every Class Leader be considered as having *two* votes, every Local Preacher or Exhorter *three*, and

and every Traveling Preacher *four*. As we do not consider that any secular advantage ought to increase the influence of individuals in the church of God, we do not see the propriety of giving Stewards and Trustees *an increase of influence, unless it be in cases where property alone is concerned*. If a difference in judgment arises *merely on that account*, we think it right that Stewards of Societies should be allowed *two*, Circuit Stewards *three*, and Trustees *four* votes. No person voting in one capacity shall vote in a different.

5. That the quarter-day shall address their letter either to the Conference, or a Committee of Conference, which they shall prefer.

6. That the Conference, either at a day set a-part for that purpose, or in a Committee, receive, and read over the different letters. Such as need particular answers may be referred to a Committee, *subject to the control of Conference*. Those which require no particular answer may be noticed in the minutes *under one general head*.

7. That at the first quarter-day, ensuing Conference, the minutes shall be delivered to the Circuit Stewards, and read to that Meeting.

8. We also think it might be expedient if a similar correspondence were instituted between the quarter-day and District Meetings.

By these means a direct communication, an avowed and manifest intercourse would be opened amongst us, as a body which could not easily be abused by the *inattention, ignorance, or art* of a few individuals.

If it be said a plan of this nature would considerably increase the labour of Conference, it is answered, 1. Divisions in the body will do so much more. 2. The government of so large a body of people must be attended with great labour. 3. This appears to reduce the labour into as small compass as possible. 4. To suppose 100,000 souls can be governed without some *sufficient intercourse* with their rulers is improper, and that to let others represent them, when they may act for themselves, is the probable way to create grievances.

Numerous amendments may doubtless be made to a plan of this nature; but its general tendency to preserve an union

is evident. Suppose for instance the whole body were to be agitated on the subject of the sacrament, and that the ensuing Conference were to be possessed of the sentiments of the people on any question or number of questions which might convey their sentiments through the medium of the last quarter-day; would they not see more clearly the things which promote peace, than if that subject be agitated by parties in the manner it now is.

Nay can we suppose any act taking place in the Conference, which in this sense, would not also be the act of the people? Would it not preserve a constant means of removing all jealousies and grievances? Can we conjecture any circumstance which needs remain unexplained? at present this may be done; but ordinarily it can only be done in what manner an Assistant thinks fit. Were it an established rule for the Circuit to correspond with the Conference, in some manner similar to this suggested, there would be little occasion for Delegates. They might in some particular cases be deemed necessary, but these would not be numerous. The people sensible they had an opportunity of speaking for themselves would be satisfied.

Should we not be a city at unity in itself, each part of the body keeping its proper place. All uniting in love; both in *deliberation* and *action* for the good of the whole. *A full intercourse and final appeal*, an intercourse by which all may communicate their sentiments on those subjects in which they are interested; an appeal to which they submitted by consent.—If this would not tend to prevent division, I am at a loss to know what would. The people would no longer be jealous of the Conference, nor the Conference of the people. Each would know what he had to do, and where the resort was. Every man might then think for himself, and act according to his judgment.

C H A P. IV.

An Address, &c.

THERE are a great number of the Brethren in the Societies, who within these few years, have expressed a strong

a strong desire to receive the Sacraments, from the hands of their own Preachers. Considerable opposition has been made to this, on various accounts.

This opposition has produced much strife and animosity. Those who desire the introduction of the Sacraments, consider themselves fully supported by the oracles of God, and consequently, their affection is weakened towards men, who blame them for their obedience to Christ. Impressed with this view, they can see no just ground for the zeal of their opponents. Far from attempting to justify what appears contrary to Scripture, I will address myself to the Brethren who suffer this opposition, permit me to suggest some views which may lessen your surprise at, or animosity against them. Weigh candidly their sentiments, and the arguments they produce for them. Tho' they may not bias your judgments on the subject in question, yet they may serve to soften the force of prejudice against their persons. You may recollect that neither their judgment on this subject, nor even the severity of their behaviour to you, may affect their salvation. Hence it is possible that you may discern in the persons of your opponents some traces of your Lord's image, and forgetting the difference of your views, or the injuries you are supposed to have received, love, love to them *as your brethren in Christ* may draw your affections towards them.

1. They urge that if the Lord's supper be generally administered by the Methodist Preachers it will alter the whole plan of the Methodists, be a general departure from their original design, which was, to leave the establishment and every other party uninterrupted, that the effect of administering the Sacrament amongst us, will be to draw of a very large body of people from their Connection with the Church of England, which, at this period, would be highly injudicious.

2. That whatever arguments are now formed against the corruptions of the establishment, or other communities, were equally forcible in the rise of Methodism.

3. That the primitive Methodists, Preachers, and People, understood the Bible, loved it, and had consciences full as tender as ours. They loved their Preachers, as fervently as

we can, yet, they did not think themselves obliged to communicate with them alone.

4. As they cannot attribute either ignorance or dissimulation, to such a body of men as the first Preachers and Methodists were, they conclude, their reasons for not having the Sacraments amongst themselves were sufficient; especially, as they had frequent opportunities of communicating with each other, in the establishment, and receiving from the clergy, who laboured amongst the Societies.

5. They remember thousands, with these views adorned their profession, and triumphed over death, hence they conclude a departure from these principles cannot be essential to salvation.

There are thousands of our Brethren, who think that these are sufficient reasons against introducing the Sacraments at present.

That, whatever weight these had at first, they have increased, from the experience of half a century, and the present state of affairs. If you cannot see the force of these arguments, bear with those who are influenced by them, exercise the same love towards your brethren of the present day, as to those who are gone, *hope* that they act according to the clearest light they have. Beware least you forget one of your Lord's commands under an apparent zeal for another.

Remember he that said *Do this in remembrance of me*, said also *a New Commandment do I give unto that ye love one another*. If indeed you believe that your opponents are the children of God, if their opposition to you, do not amount to a *damnable heresy*, look stedfastly at their motives, and do not attribute a want of judgment to a worse cause; by this means, whatever violence there may be on their part, the ways of God, will not, on your account be evil spoken of, you will have the answer of a good conscience, a testimony that you are of God, *because you love the brethren*.

But you say, it is unnecessary to plead thus with you; you do not condemn your brethren for their attachment to the establishment, you will rejoice to live with them as brethren if they will give you the right hand of fellowship, and permit you to act according to the dictates of conscience.

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Satisfied with such a declaration, I would address those who blame you for pleading the *dictates of conscience* and the *commands of God*. These, Brethren, are sacred things. Whoever assures us they are the motives of their conduct, commands our attention. If our brethren, who are solicitous for the Sacraments, do indeed assign these as their reasons, consider in whose name they speak, do not deny them those rights, *you, as men who must be judged*, need yourselves. If the Lord speaks in his word, we must leave events to him.

Keeping this in view it may be asked, 1. If the Sacraments were to be admitted into the Methodist Societies, would not those who prefer communicating elsewhere have that privileged? If a great majority of the people prefer the establishment, would they not continue there?

2. If the Methodists do not act from principle our contention is unnecessary, if they do; if the body of the Methodists, *from principle* solicit the Sacrament from their brethren, is not every attempt to restrain them an act of violence to conscience?

3. It has been said, that the admission of the Sacraments will weaken the zeal of the Preachers for the salvation of men, and absorb them in a contest for place and precedence, for titles and honors (f).

Is there a considerate, conscientious man in the kingdom, who will *deliberately* assert, that there is any *necessary connection* between the remembrance of the death of Jesus Christ, and a contest for *place, precedence, titles, and honors*? With reluctance I pursue the reflections this objection has given rise to; but persuaded that jealousy (cruel as the grave) is one source from whence our disorders proceed; that there is the greatest necessity for preventing that *accursed gangrene* from spreading its influence any further. I refer my brethren to a note annexed (g.)

4. Is the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper a plain command of God or not? Is it true, or false, that Jesus Christ desired *his followers*, to do this in remembrance of him? Did he *command his ministers* to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? as this will admit of no dispute amongst us.

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It must further be asked, Do we consider the Methodists as the professed followers of Christ and their preachers as his ministers? If this be denied, it must be allowed, the Scriptures alluded to, do not affect them, but if not, those who oppose them on this subject, (whatever arguments may be brought from precedent, or other circumstances) would do well to consider whether they are not in some danger of *making void the commands of God, by the precepts of men*? If the reasons advanced against the Sacrament ought to silence your brethren, and prevent *them* from condemning *you*, for not uniting with them in those ordinances, sure the *plain commands of God*, ought to prevent *you* from treating *them* with violence and casting them out, *merely on account* of an avowed attachment to the dying commandment of their suffering Lord.

5. Admitting that the effects you dread should follow. Suppose the whole body of Methodists should, by this means, separate from their other religious connections. Suppose a contest for places and honors ensue, shall we do evil that good may come? Will a violent opposition to men when they vow obedience to the plain commands of God prevent such evils? No, my brethren, whatever others do, let us walk by the unerring rule of Scripture, and leave our brethren and fellow creatures to account to him who judgeth righteously.

Let every Society act for itself. Let each individual judge for himself. If the major part of a Society prefer the Sacrament (H) What part of the Bible will support us in opposing them? Why should we forsake the assembling with them *on that account*?

The reception or rejection of the Lord's Supper never was made a condition of our union with each other. The sole condition was truly manifesting a desire to flee from the wrath to come. Let us not alter *this* important part of our *old plan*. Unite in separating sinners from your Society as zealously as possible, but let it not be published to the world that you divide from men *merely because they shew their love unto the Lord Jesus Christ*.

6. There are still *stronger motives* to prevent our brethren separating from those, who desire to participate with them, the memorials of Christ's death. Remember, my brethren, the

the second appearing of that Saviour, and say, In what light will it then appear to yourselves, to men and angels, to the Judge *himself*, that you rejected those you believed were his followers, *only because* they were solicitous to unite with you, in preference to others, in the continual remembrance of the amazing mysteries of redemption; that you rejected your brethren because they preferred obeying the plain commands of God *to every other consideration*.

These things are not written to enflame but to present the subject in that view, in which it must appear when stripped of all the circumstances that now attend it. If the reception of the Sacraments are allowed *whenever* desired, will not the contention cease? If the Sacraments are the real cause of division, is not the subject in its proper light? Do not some separate from their brethren *on that account*, and can they evade the consequences alluded to?

Persuaded that nothing will prevent a division if considerations of this nature do not, I would leave this subject, and address some of our brethren who are particularly interested in the debates which have taken place.

Amidst the numerous parties which have arisen in the present controversy, there are few who have been treated with greater severity than the Trustees. To you, Brethren, I would here address myself.

When many of you are considered with an eye of Christian love; when your general characters as individuals, and your actions as members of the Methodist Societies, are candidly reviewed, we are ready to allow, you have ill deserved the harsh censures you have suffered.

There may be several individuals of a very different character; doubtless there are some whose immorality or worldly mindedness have justly separated them from the Society. But surely numbers of the Trustees are very different. It may be justly asked, Are not many of you, in point of understanding, amongst the first class of your brethren? Many of you are men of sound judgment and considerable information. Many are men of eminent piety, full of faith and love, manifesting in your intercourse, with the world, the mind which was in Christ Jesus. Men, diligent in business, fervent in spirit, full of all goodness, able to admonish one another, rich
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in good works, filled with fruits of righteousness, as trees planted by rivers of water bringing forth, richly, all manner of fruits in their season? Are you not worthy of much esteem in the Connection? Do not the Methodists owe you much in the Lord? Next to those who watch over our souls, and rule well, are not our brethren, the Trustees, to be honoured for their work's sake? Yes, Brethren, we ought not to forget your works of faith and labours of love. We remember, to whom under God, we owe, *I do not say our souls, nor the Gospel; but the comfortable means by which we now bear it.* In how many instances have whole Societies and Towns been favoured with the regular preaching of the Word by the means of some of our brethren, who, in the infancy of the work, ventured (perhaps) their whole property to effect it. God has not been unfaithful, he has in this life repaid you an hundred fold. Neither ought we to be ungrateful to the instruments, any more than to the author of our blessings.

When we consider your private characters, and your public actions, especially toward the Connection, we must acknowledge our obligations under God to you; we must reverence you, for your work's sake; we must allow you are the brethren whose praises are in the churches, that as far as *soundness of judgment, distinguished holiness and active zeal* give influence, you are worthy of it.

It is not only for what you have done, that you are intitled to the esteem of your brethren, but in many instances you certainly bear a considerable share of the burthen in the present support of the work. You have made yourselves accountable for the payment of all borrowed money on the various premises in the Connection. In some particular cases you may have risked considerable sums of money, and rendered your families liable to large debts (1.) You are certainly entitled to more than the esteem of your brethren, common justice demands that you ought to have every possible security for your property; if any deeds can be made preferable to others, by *which the whole Connection, Preachers and People*, should pledge their last shilling, to guarantee what you have so generously risked for them, it ought to be done. We will allow also that many of your trust deeds

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imply that you ought to take heed that no doctrines be preached in the places you are in trust for, contrary to those contained in the Rev. Mr Wesley's notes on the New Testament, &c. In this view, we are taught to consider you as the guardians of the people's consciences. On this point, Brethren, permit me to be explicit.

If, when you claim this as your office, you do it *independent of the judgment of your brethren for whom you are in trust*, we cannot but suspect consequences will follow of the most fatal nature.

Suppose a congregation of two thousand people united for hearing the word, and worshipping God in any house held by Trustees in the manner supposed, the congregation is unanimous, four of the Trustees out of seven determine that doctrines are preached *contrary to the "Notes;"* the two thousand people and Minor Trustees say, No doctrines are preached *contrary to the Bible*, we indemnify your property, there is sufficient security for every thing you risque, let us worship God according to our conscience.

We ask, ought the major part of the Trustees, under such circumstances, to persist by the civil arm, to disturb that congregation? *Does money? Does their LEGAL right? Does truth, reason, or Scripture justify them, in compelling these souls, either to submit to them, or quit the premises?* If Trustees claim any power of this nature, do they not make themselves judges for others in what relates to their eternal state? and is not this the very principle in which Protestants dissent from the church of Rome? In what is the Bishop of Rome more justly the object of abhorrence than his claiming a supremacy over conscience? And if any man, on account of his property, influence, wisdom or piety, arrogate a power, to compel the consciences of others in their duty to God, he precisely resembles him who exalteth himself above all that is called God. It is probable our brethren are not aware of these consequences.

But if they claim *more* than an ample security for their property, and the influence of their judgment *as brethren* in the churches, it remains to be determined whether they are not invading the rights of conscience.

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This is written on a supposition that the Trustees, who claim this power of judging *for thousands* in matters of an eternal nature, are *wise* and *holy* men; but what must be the consequence if men continue Trustees, claim and use this power, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame?

What shall we say, if *drunkards, liars, profane persons, tobacco-mongers, adulterers, and thieves*, assume and claim a power of judging for Societies and Congregations on the awful subjects in question? If these should be not only wicked but *oppressive* and *designing* men what must ensue? Surely those who are solicitous to establish a system of this nature know not what they do.

Surely it is evident from all these views, that no legal deeds ought to confer a power to judge *for others* in the things of God; and that the most fatal consequences must follow the establishment of such principles in any religious community.

Whatever means can be devised to accommodate all parties, on Scripture principles, will afford real joy to those who wish to be governed by them. Unsolicitous to promote any thing else, I would close this little tract with an attempt to point out some of the evils which are likely to ensue a material division in the Methodist Connection.

An Address to the Preachers and People, united in the Methodist Societies.

1st. **S**HOULD a general division take place through the Connection, will there not be numerous appeals to civil law, respecting the claims to preaching houses? Nay will not the several Members of Conference have recourse there, to determine the right of the property they are entrusted with? Is not this an evil greatly to be dreaded, as subversive of the whole of Christianity? What a lamentable sight to see thousands of men, who have been united for many years, in professing their hope to judge angels, appealing to those that are without, to determine who has a legal right to sums of money or preaching houses! Who will believe

believe these are the followers of them, who had all things common? who were forbid appealing to the civil law in such cases?

Surely those who believe the New Testament had rather wander about destitute and tormented, to seek the word of the Lord, than, at this awful period of infidelity, enjoy places of worship on such terms. Sure, it will be more rational to take down every stone of our preaching houses, and inform the world, we do it to prevent disputes, than be obliged to have recourse to the civil magistrate, under the circumstances supposed. Of the two, perhaps this will bring the least reproach to religion.

2. Is there no reason to suppose that were suits at law, relative to preaching houses, to be general through the kingdom, that many families, might, from one circumstance or another, be injured in their property? Who will assert that no bankruptcies would take place, no widows or orphans be deprived of their support, and left to perish in a merciless world, merely from this cause? Such effects are not impossible, nay they are highly probable; and who will answer to the *judge of the fatherless and widows* in his holy habitation for unnecessarily precipitating such calamities?

3. Will not such a division produce personal enmity with all its effects? will not the union between the most useful men in the Connection be destroyed? will they then love as brethren? will they strengthen each others hands? will they be tender over each others character? will they be of one heart and one mind, striving together for the hope of the Gospel? Shall we not see them employed in depreciating the characters of their opponents? shall we not see the ministers of the lowly Jesus openly resisting each other in the face of congregations, whilst those congregations breathe the language of contending armies? Surely none that have read the whole of the letters and pamphlets, which have been spread through the Societies this year, can help apprehending such consequences.

Some of them indeed manifest the mind that was in Christ Jesus; they discover much of that love which hopeth, believeth, and endureth all things; but who would imagine that some of the attacks made on Mess. Mather, Benson, Bradburn,

burn, Moore, Rodda, Brettel, and Vasey were made by the ministers of him who delivered the sermon on the Mount, and the 14, 15, 16, and 17 chapters of John? Who can help concluding that if such dispositions prevail—Christianity is lost, we have nothing left worth contending for? Nor is it saying too much that this must be the consequence of such divisions.

4. If personal enmity and strife prevail, will not confusion and every evil work follow? If Conference and people divide, and such effects attend a division, who will answer for scattering the Societies and Congregations? How many thousands of souls, who are now regularly instructed, will be as sheep without a shepherd? In how many places will the work be totally destroyed? What multitudes will hereby be plunged into all the horrors of infidelity? How will our profession be universally laughed at by infidels and gain-sayers? Instead of stemming the torrent, we shall contribute to open the flood-gates of impiety; so far as Methodism contributes towards it, this kingdom must lose the influence of the Gospel, and instead of extending it to other countries we shall spread the fire of hell.

Sure then here are sufficient motives to make us cautious how we divide.

Shall we, who in this evil day, profess ourselves amongst the most devoted followers of the lowly Jesus; shall we, at a period when his name is blasphemed—his Word denied—his Cross trampled upon; shall we, whom he has so peculiarly favoured with a dispensation of his Gospel, deny his authority, insult his members, destroy his image, and by this means crucify him a-fresh, and put him to open shame? Shall we not rather submit to his gracious command, manifest we revere his authority, and promote his kingdom? Shall we not rather prove, before an adulterous and sinful generation, that we are his disciples, by *loving one another*.

Surely it were better to sacrifice every thing (except a good conscience) than contribute to such evils. But, when the way is open, when we appear only to want *mutual intercourse and Christian subjection to each other*, why should we be unwilling to try *any expedient* that may unite us? On this account we strongly recommend to our brethren some attempts

tempts for a constant intercourse with the Conference, as the most scriptural and simple means of our union. This is the old and approved way. Let us try it more fully. Instead of rending each other into parties, let us, through this medium, commune with each other. Should this means fail, let that led Israel like a flock, may discover some means more effectual.

N O T E S.

(A.) **T**HIS survey of the New Testament church is chiefly taken from a book, entitled "A Compendium of Social Religion, or the Nature and Constitution of Christian Churches, by Dan. Turner." Printed 1758.

Those who wish to see an arrangement of the principal Scriptures on that subject, would do well to consult that work.

(B.) It is no inconsiderable proof of the truth of the New Testament that it places men in so endearing a relation to each other, as that of brethren. By this means it lays the surest foundation for the support of civil society. Every species of fraud and injustice being a breach of the royal law of love; whilst it is fulfilled in that word, love one another. Hence it is evident that no man ought to be ruled, without his consent, unless either the *weakness of his understanding* or *wickedness of his life* has rendered him unfit for society.

Nothing more need be said to shew the evil which must arise from any system, where the body of the people have not a sufficient intercourse with their rulers.

(C.) If this remark is properly attended to, it will be evident that no real deviation from our plan is suggested, and that the labour of Conference will not be materially increased by an established correspondence with the Circuits. An Assistant will generally have sufficient influence in his own Circuit. District Meetings must also be found more capable of determining on local circumstances than the Conference; hence the cases must be very few which will be thought of magnitude enough by judicious men to be investigated before the Conference, *after the decisions of a Quarter-day or District Meeting*. Should some of our brethren suppose that the Societies, having no proper representative in those meetings, their concerns may not be properly attended to. It would be well for them to recollect, the body of Traveling Preachers

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can no longer answer their professed design than they maintain the affections of the people; that it is not a supposable case they will persist in measures generally contrary to the judgment of their people, when that is clearly explained, as that must necessarily destroy their union.

(D.) 1. Though it seemed proper to propose some plan of this nature, yet I wish to observe that as the chief design of the Essay is to promote a fuller intercourse throughout the whole body, I am not partial to this more than any other; but should rejoice to see *any plan* which will be most effectual for the purpose. 2. The tendency of this is not so much to determine the particular subjects now in dispute, as to fix a means whereby *any subject* may be determined.

(E.) In consequence of the printed Letter I have received different hints, some of which are annexed:

Letter I. We think the inequality of votes proposed will rather create envy and discord.

Letter II. I think the first thing should be to have the Stewards the fair representatives of the people. 2. You ought to have Delegates from your Quarterly Meeting at the District Meeting. 3. A Steward shall have as many votes as he represents Classes. No Preacher Traveling or Local ought to have *double or triple* power. The Chairman in all cases has a casting vote. Your dividing votes among Trustees, Circuit, and Town Stewards is very curious, I hope the *Lord will preserve us from it*. Let every case only be brought fairly before a Quarterly, and if not settled there, then before a District Meeting; and this will prevent the necessity of more votes than the different Societies require.

I annex these remarks that a variety of sentiments may be seen on the same subject. Would observe that the plan inserted here implies, that if Societies are dissatisfied with the determination of any subject, every Class Leader may collect the sentiments of his people for or against a question proposed; these may be sent to a Quarter-day, District, or Conference Meeting in cases of necessity; but as it is to be hoped the general determinations of Quarterly Meetings would meet the approbation of the people, applications to them individually would rarely occur.

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By this means the influence of an individual, though he had four votes, could seldom injure the body.

Letter III. It appears you conceive of Methodism, as if it wanted a more perfect connection of its parts. I judge precisely the same.

When Mr Wesley was taken from us every Member stood in another capacity than that in which he had stood before. Our church (or let it be called what it may) ought to have been organized, and a regular chain of communication formed from the Conference to each individual member. Partial amendments have been introduced by every succeeding Conference, but a general plan is still wanting; yours might at least be an improvement. Certain it is, the nearer our approximation to the primitive church the less labour shall we have in future, as we shall be spared the trouble of ripping our paltry patchwork, and shall be rising proportionably towards an evangelic completion.

If you have considered the subject of the Lord's Supper in a divine and scriptural point of view, I acquiesce in your sentiments. The more God is taken into our account, the less liable shall we be to err. Vulgar prejudices and worldly prudence have ever been injurious to the religion of Jesus Christ. No man has a right to force the conscience of another. The œconomy of God, as our *moral* and *gracious* lawgiver, does not enjoin my conscience to pay venal submission to the will of any creature. It is a duty therefore which I owe to him, neither to suffer any thing to be forced on my conscience, nor to permit it to be debarred of any thing, which it apprehends from the light of revelation and analogy of faith, to be advantageous to the welfare of my soul. I believe there are no real grounds for supposing a division of the Preachers will take place. An accommodation, without a scriptural principle may be a preventive of evil, but not a radical remedy. The body *must* resort to principle.

(F.) Admission of Sacraments. I am aware that the expression made use of, is a *new system*; but as that certainly means the administration of the Sacraments, the inference is obvious.

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(G.) *These reflections are pursued*, because they appear to respect the origin of the evil.

Those who are solicitous for the administration of the Sacrament being frequently censured by the opposite party, 1. As wanting to introduce innovations. 2. To aspire after sinful honors. It must be granted, that the administration of the Sacraments by itinerant preachers is an innovation amongst the Methodist Societies, but till it is proved *unscriptural*. Men who believe the Bible, will not be moved by the argument.

“The preachers are ambitious;” where are the men? What proofs do they give of their ambition? Should the introduction of the Sacraments, or attempts to establish any particular form of government, which they think likely to promote true religion be alledged, impartial minds will require stronger proofs.

Had ambition or interest, moved men of such capacities, as Mess. Thompson, Benson, Bradburn, and many others, who might be named. Instead of having all the sweets of social and domestic life, connected with the interference of others; perhaps their affluence and independance in life had been equal to thousands of their people, who owe their first motives to sobriety and industry to their labours.

When I have observed the cottages of those who compose the mass of our Societies, I have thought some of our preachers, in some instances, were not sufficiently sensible of the love of their people; they did not recollect that their support was materially derived from persons who had much less of the comforts of life than themselves; but when we find the charge of ambition does not arise from them, but from men surrounded with affluence and enjoying the elegancies of life; it must only be said, they have not considered, on what terms they would sacrifice their enjoyments for the daily martyrdom of itinerancy.

(H.) *Prefer the Sacrament.* The more closely the subject is considered *merely* on scripture ground; the more it will appear that no member of a religious Society ought to separate from his brethren, *merely* because they prefer communicating with the members of their own Society; on that account

Account it certainly will be according to the oracles of God, to permit every Society to have the Sacrament where the majority desire it. When the majority decline it, they ought not to separate from their brethren if the lesser number desire to remember the Lord's death together, whether in a private room or otherwise. Should we divide from each other on this account, we shall depart both from our old plan and the Bible, which make no such term of union.

(11.) Large debts. Perhaps in most cases the premises are certain security; but there are others in which there is a great probability of their not being worth one half of the debt upon them. I speak from facts. On that account Trustees ought to have security from the Members of Conference, or a sufficient number of them, that such houses shall be provided for by the body of itinerant Preachers, or the parties indemnified; as a division in Conference and withdrawing the Preachers might involve a few individuals in very great difficulties.

